

It's summer in the OC. Sandals and sunscreen are in use. The top is down on the convertible, and the boogie boards are out at Doheny. Many people's minds are wandering off toward tropical drinks or bathing-suit-driven diets. So rather than give you a heavy look at some grave issue being debated in o...

It's summer in the OC. Sandals and sunscreen are in use. The top is down on the convertible, and the boogie boards are out at Doheny. Many people's minds are wandering off toward tropical drinks or bathing-suit-driven diets. So rather than give you a heavy look at some grave issue being debated in our nation's capitol, I will instead give you short thoughts on a wide range of stuff. Since I am a congressman, I figure you really don't care about my comments on fashion or sports, so I will keep the topics limited to those with some connection to current public policy.

- The state of California has lots of money these days, in part because of capital gains taxes being paid by Googlairees and others. The same thing happened in 2000, when Cisco, Intel and others paid stock options to employees. That bubble burst, and the state deficit came crashing down as a result. We should not base our future on unsustainable revenues.

- None of us want child molesters living near our children. But children live everywhere. Rather than fighting over where to put them, maybe we should just keep them in jail longer.

- I'm more worried about Iran's nuclear program than North Korea's missile firings. North Korea is one of the poorest nations on Earth and is surrounded by prosperous countries. It's hard to wage war without money. Iran has oil and, therefore, money. Maybe Kim Jong Il is just a tyrannical despot who is upset because no one is paying any attention to his tyranny.

- People will not buy cars they don't want even if the government wants them to. The public wants a car that's big inside, is easy to park, goes really fast, gets great mileage, is safe and looks good. In short, we want it all. Technology is moving us closer to fuel efficiency without compromise. Markets and the public, not government mandates, will drive that demand.

- I don't want oil drilling off the coast of California. Too much of our economy and our way of life are dependent on a pristine, unobstructed Pacific Ocean. But if people off the coast of Texas want to drill there and they believe that the environmental effects can be contained, then let them do it.
- Homeowners associations tell us to do lots of things. I know. I have lived in one for over 20 years and once even served on the board. But they should not tell us that we can't fly the American flag on our own house.
- We have to reform Social Security and Medicare. If we don't make reforms, these programs will eat up 100% of the federal budget in 20 years, leaving no room for little things like national defense. Even a 100% tax on income over \$100,000 won't be enough to pay for it.
- The federal budget deficit is now lower as a percentage of the economy (GDP) than it's been in 17 of the last 25 years. If the economy continues strong and we keep spending growth to 4% or less, we could be in a surplus by 2009.
- Someone once asked me if it bothered me that there are so many jokes about the incompetence of government in general and Congress in particular. ("Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself," said Mark Twain.) Not at all. Part of the American character is a healthy mistrust of government. I hope we don't ever lose that.
- When I look at the baseball rankings in the two newspapers in Washington, the Angels are just listed as "Los Angeles." No "of Anaheim." That bothers me.
- I really didn't care who won the soccer World Cup. But I watched it anyway.

OK, those last two have nothing to do with public policy. I'm just making sure you're paying attention so the umbrella doesn't fall out of your drink.